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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/27 of 6 December 1995, requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its fifty-first session on the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82). 1/

2. In response to that request, the present report provides information on the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference.

3. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Working Group of the Whole to Evaluate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space considered the question of the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference during their 1996 sessions. Accordingly, the information contained in the present report primarily reflects the result of the work of the Committee, whose report 2/ is also before the General Assembly.

II. WORKING GROUP OF THE WHOLE TO EVALUATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

4. The Working Group of the Whole was reconvened by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its 1996 session in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/27 to continue its work.

5. At its 1996 session, the Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Working Group of the Whole as contained in its report (A/AC.105/637, annex II) and recommended that the Working Group be reconvened in 1997 to continue its work.

III. INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION

6. In paragraph 27 of its resolution 50/27, the General Assembly requested all organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations working in the field of outer space or on space-related matters to cooperate in the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference. In that connection, the Committee noted with appreciation the participation in all stages of its work and that of its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee by representatives of United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies and other international organizations.

7. Several United Nations bodies and specialized agencies have extensive space-related programmes that are contributing to the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Details of these programmes can be found in the yearly reports of the Secretary-General on coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system. The latest report (A/AC.105/631) contains an overview of the work programme of United Nations bodies and agencies for 1996 and 1997.

8. The programmes and projects of the organizations of the United Nations system are coordinated at annual inter-agency meetings. As its seventeenth session, the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities agreed that the use of advanced information technologies, in particular the Internet, should be further expanded as a means of strengthening inter-agency coordination and that the Office for Outer Space Affairs could serve as a coordinating node for accessing space-related information of agencies in the United Nations system. The eighteenth session of the Inter-Agency Meeting is scheduled to be held in May 1997 at the United Nations Office at Vienna.

IV. STUDIES

9. In response to the requests of the Working Group of the Whole at its ninth session, the Secretariat prepared and submitted to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-third session, in 1996, the following reports and studies: "Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space: international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space: activities of Member States" (A/AC.105/614 and Add.1-3), "Micro- and small satellites: current projects and future perspectives for international cooperation" (A/AC.105/611) and "Use of remote sensing technologies for environmental applications, particularly in support of the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development" (A/AC.105/632).

10. In endorsing the recommendations of the Working Group of the Whole at its tenth session, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space noted that the Secretariat had been requested to prepare further studies and reports of relevance to the recommendations of the Conference.

11. In addition, and in accordance with the recommendations of the Working Group, the Secretariat will prepare for submission to the Subcommittee at its 1997 session the following reports and studies: reports from Member States and international organizations involved in space activities on their space activities subject to greater international cooperation and on their research on space debris, particularly on practices that have been adopted and that have proved effective in minimizing the creation of space debris; as well as reports from Member States containing information on their national and cooperative international space activities; on their resources and technological capabilities in the fields of space activities for the promotion of cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space; on safety of orbiting space objects with

nuclear power sources (NPS); and on the collision of orbiting space objects with NPS on board with space debris. The Secretariat will also prepare technical studies on space applications for sustainable development; developing tele-education programmes through international cooperation; basic space science in developing countries; space technology applications for preventing and mitigating the effects of natural disasters; and use of new technologies in communications and information networks.

V. UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON SPACE APPLICATIONS

12. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 37/90 of 10 December 1982, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Conference that the United Nations Programme on Space Applications should be directed towards seven specific objectives. The activities conducted in 1995 by the Programme and the plans for the period 1996-1997 to meet those objectives are contained in the report of the United Nations Expert on Space Applications (A/AC.105/625).

A. Training courses/workshops/conferences/symposia

13. Part of the activities carried out or planned under the Programme in 1996, in cooperation with other United Nations bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and Governments of Member States, include the following training courses, workshops, conferences and symposium: the Fifth United Nations/European Space Agency (ESA) Workshop on Basic Space Science, organized in cooperation with the Government of Sri Lanka; the United Nations/ United States of America International Conference on Spin-off Benefits of Space Technology: Challenges and Opportunities, organized in cooperation with the Government of the United States of America; the United Nations/ESA Workshop on Microwave Remote Sensing Applications, organized in cooperation with the Government of the Philippines; the Sixth United Nations/Sweden International Training Course on Remote Sensing Education for Educators, organized in cooperation with the Government of Sweden; the United Nations/Chile/ESA Regional Workshop on Space Technology for Prevention and Mitigation of the Effects of Disasters, organized in cooperation with the Government of Chile and ESA; the United Nations/Austria/ESA/European Commission Symposium on Space Technology Applications for the Benefit of Developing Countries, organized in cooperation with the Government of Austria, the State of Styria and the City of Graz; the Sixth United Nations/ESA Workshop on Basic Space Science, organized in cooperation with the Government of Germany; the United Nations/Instituto Nacional de Técnica Aeroespacial (INTA)/ESA International Conference on Small Satellite Missions, organized in cooperation with the Government of Spain; the United Nations/International Astronautical Federation (IAF)/ESA Workshop on Education and Awareness: Space Technology and Applications in the Developing World, organized in cooperation with the Government of China; and the Second United Nations Regional Conference on Space Technology for Sustainable Development in Africa, organized in cooperation with the Government of South Africa.

14. In 1997, the following training courses, conference, colloquium and symposium are planned:

(a) The Seventh United Nations/Sweden International Training Course on Remote Sensing Education for Educators, to be hosted and co-sponsored by the Government of Sweden;

(b) The United Nations/Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) Colloquium on Satellite Data Transformation;

(c) The United Nations International Training Course on Communications and Information Technology for Development;

(d) The Fourth United Nations/ESA Training Course on European Remote Sensing Data Applications;

(e) The United Nations Conference on Spin-off Benefits of Space Exploration;

(f) The United Nations/IAF Symposium on Space Technology in Developing Countries during the forty-eighth Congress of IAF.

B. Development of indigenous capability

15. In accordance with the recommendation of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space concerning the development of indigenous capabilities, General Assembly resolution 45/72 of 11 December 1990, in which the Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Committee that the United Nations should lead, with the active support of its specialized agencies and other international organizations, an international effort to establish regional centres for space science and technology in existing national/regional educational institutions in the developing countries, and resolution 50/27, in which the Assembly once again considered it particularly urgent that the United Nations should support the creation of adequate training centres at the regional level, the Secretariat has continued its efforts, undertaken as part of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, and has made much progress in establishing regional centres for space science and technology education. Pursuant to the recommendation by the General Assembly in resolution 50/27, the Secretariat took the necessary actions to establish those centres on the basis of affiliation to the United Nations as early as possible. The Secretariat has provided updated information on its activities concerning the regional centres in the report of the United Nations Expert on Space Applications (A/AC.105/625) and has also reported to the Committee on the latest status of this initiative. In addition, it is also continuing consultations with the United Nations regional commissions and the countries that have expressed interest in hosting such centres, as well as its discussions with Member States, UNDP and other regional and international funding institutions on the question of the funding for these centres.

16. The Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific was inaugurated in India in November 1995, and the first education programme of the Centre started in April 1996 with 26 students. Participation in the Governing Board of the Centre and in its activities is open to Member States of the region, and in due course and upon approval by the Governing

Board, the Centre would grow into a network of nodes enabling it to fully utilize the resources and potential of the region.

17. As for the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, its host countries, Brazil and Mexico, informed the General Assembly in November 1995 that they were nearing agreement on all aspects relating to the establishment of the Centre. Those countries noted during the 1996 session of the Committee that the necessary coordination between the United Nations entities involved in the matter and the host countries was taking place on the basis of affiliation to the United Nations, which would further expedite the establishment of the Centre.

18. In the region of Africa, the offers and commitments of Morocco and Nigeria favoured the early establishment, operation and long-term sustainability of a centre for space science and technology education in Morocco for French-speaking African countries and such a centre in Nigeria for English-speaking African countries. Both countries are finalizing cooperation agreements that will be entered into by the Member States concerned later in 1996.

19. In the region covered by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), discussions are in progress with the parties concerned on the establishment of a centre for space science and technology education, and a mission will take place in October 1996. Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic have indicated their interest in hosting such a centre in the region. In the region of Europe, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Turkey have agreed to establish an educational system consisting of a network of space science and technology education institutions. An expert group will be convened to outline the modalities for the establishment of such a network.

20. For all the regional centres for space science and technology education, a model curriculum has been developed to provide each centre with a benchmark of the academic level necessary for international recognition. The booklet entitled "Centres for space science and technology education: education curricula" is being finalized to be published by the end of 1996.

C. Technical advisory services

21. In paragraph 7 (g) of its resolution 37/90, the General Assembly decided that the United Nations Programme on Space Applications should, upon request by Member States or any of the specialized agencies, be directed towards the provision or arrangements for provision of technical advisory services on space applications projects. With regard to that mandate, the Programme has provided or is providing assistance in the following areas:

(a) In collaboration with ESA and the Department for Development Support and Management Services, in identifying and implementing support mechanisms to enable scientists from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean to receive and utilize data from the European Remote Sensing Satellite of ESA;

(b) To the Government of Ecuador, in promoting regional cooperation, administration and funding of the ground receiving station at Cotopaxi, Ecuador;

(c) To the Government of Chile, in its follow-up, as pro tempore secretariat, of the recommendations of the Second Space Conference of the Americas;

(d) To the Government of Uruguay, in the preparation for the Third Space Conference of the Americas, to be held from 4 to 8 November 1996;

(e) To the Government of the Republic of Korea, in the growth of the Asia-Pacific Satellite Communications Council (see para. 24 below);

(f) In collaboration with ESA, in follow-up activities relating to the series of workshops on basic space science, including: establishment of the astronomical observatory in Sri Lanka, which was inaugurated in January 1996; operation of an astronomical observatory in Honduras; development of an Inter-African Astronomical Observatory and Science Park on the Gamsberg in Namibia; and upgrading of the Kottamia Observatory in Egypt;

(g) To the region of Africa, in implementing the project titled "Cooperative Information Network Linking Scientists and Professionals in Africa (COPINE)", which would establish an efficient communication network among African and European professionals and scientists at national, continental and intercontinental levels, and would allow for the exchange of valuable information on health care, agriculture, education, science and technology, and the management and monitoring of natural resources and environment.

D. Long-term fellowships

22. In promoting the development of indigenous capability, the Programme will award 15 long-term fellowships for the in-depth training of individuals from developing countries in the areas of research and applications in remote sensing technology; space antennas and propagation; communications systems; remote sensing information systems; and remote sensing instrumentation. The following have renewed their offer of fellowships for the 1995-1996 period: the Government of Brazil (10) and ESA (5).

E. Regional mechanisms of cooperation

23. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/27, the Secretariat continued its efforts to strengthen the regional mechanisms of cooperation in carrying out various activities in the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in particular those relating to the Programme on Space Applications.

24. The efforts of the Programme made through its advisory service to the Government of the Republic of Korea resulted in the establishment and growth of the Asia-Pacific Satellite Communications Council. The Council aims at:

promoting cooperation and harmonization in the development and utilization of satellite communications in the region; facilitating access to information by island States and enhancing regional cooperation; and bridging the gaps between groups with competing interests, particularly those institutions or organizations which are mostly interested in the technical aspect of telecommunications and others interested in the business aspects. As of October 1995, membership of the Council had grown to 40 and had spread from the Asia-Pacific geographical area to Europe and North America.

25. The establishment of regional centres for space science and technology education, the primary goal of which is to enhance the academic and professional capabilities as well as the technical infrastructure in space science and technology in the institutions in developing countries in each region, is also viewed as being very much a part of the Secretariat's effort to strengthen mechanisms of regional cooperation. Once established, each centre would be able to expand and become part of a network that could cover specific programme elements in established institutions related to space technology in each region.

26. The follow-up activities to the workshops on basic space science (see para. 21 (f) above) also resulted in the enhancement of regional cooperation. The assistance provided to the Governments of Egypt, Honduras, Namibia and Sri Lanka in developing facilities required for activities in astronomy and planetary exploration contributed to the development of international astronomical observatory network in Western Asia, Central America, Africa and Asia.

VI. INTERNATIONAL SPACE INFORMATION SERVICE

27. In paragraph 8 of its resolution 37/90, the General Assembly decided to establish an International Space Information Service, consisting initially of a directory of sources of information and data services to provide direction, upon request, to accessible data banks and information sources.

28. With regard to that mandate, the International Space Information Service published Highlights in Space (A/AC.105/618), based on annual reports prepared by COSPAR and IAF, including a submission by the International Institute of Space Law (IISL); and the seventh volume of Seminars of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications (A/AC.105/621), containing selected papers from the seminars, workshops and training courses of the Programme in 1995.

29. Progress has been made to augment the International Space Information Service through the development of a limited database capability and the "home page" on the Internet. The home page of the Office for Outer Space Affairs currently contains information on all the space-related legal instruments adopted by the General Assembly, including their full texts, information on the Committee, including its documents and those of its subsidiary bodies, an overview of the Programme on Space Applications, space-related information submitted by Member States, and a "frequently-asked questions" page where common questions relating to the United Nations and outer space are answered. In the light of the above, the Secretariat is continuing to cooperate with the Committee of Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) and the German space agency,

DARA, in the preparation of a study on the feasibility of establishing a computer-based International Space Information Service.

VII. VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

30. In paragraph 10 of its resolution 37/90, the General Assembly appealed to all Governments to make voluntary contributions, either in money or in kind, towards carrying out the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. In his note verbale dated 11 March 1983, the Secretary-General brought that paragraph to the attention of Member States, particularly with respect to the newly mandated and expanded activities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications. Member States and intergovernmental organizations which have responded to this appeal since the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly have been mentioned under appropriate headings in the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. 2/

31. Following the recommendation of the Committee in 1993 to the General Assembly that it should increase the budget allocation for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications so that the Programme would be able to implement more fully the recommendations of the Conference, the Assembly, at its forty-eighth session, had approved an additional budget allocation for the Programme for the biennium 1994-1995. However, the current financial situation of the Organization and various cost-saving measures introduced since September 1995, resulting in the reduction of the regular budget allocation of the Programme, led to the curtailment and postponement of some of the mandatory activities of the Programme. The Committee at its 1996 session took note of the disappointment expressed by representatives of developing countries at the lack of financial resources available to implement fully the recommendations of the Conference.

VIII. THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

32. In paragraph 32 of its resolution 50/27, the General Assembly agreed that a third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space could be convened before the turn of the present century and that, prior to recommending a date for the conference, there should be a consensus recommendation on the agenda, venue and funding of the conference. The Assembly also recommended that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee continue the work it had conducted at its 1995 session, with the aim being to complete the development and refinement of a framework that would allow the Committee at its 1996 session to evaluate proposals and consider all possibilities of achieving the final objectives of such a conference. The Assembly agreed that, on the basis of the work of the Subcommittee, the Committee at its 1996 session should consider all issues related to the possible convening of a third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, with a view to making a final recommendation to the General Assembly at that session of the Committee.

33. The Subcommittee, through its Working Group of the Whole, carried out the tasks entrusted to it by the General Assembly. The Working Group considered the objectives and organization of the conference, other means to achieve the goals set for the conference and other ideas for the conference. In adopting the report, the Subcommittee agreed that the report of the Working Group (see A/AC.105/637, annex II, paras. 14-43, and appendices I-III) provided the basis for the Committee to carry out the task entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

34. The Committee considered the matter and agreed that a special session of the Committee, open to all Members of the United Nations (UNISPACE III), should be convened at the United Nations Office at Vienna in 1999, unless the Committee considers the year 2000 more appropriate. The Committee also agreed that it would act as the Preparatory Committee for UNISPACE III and that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee would act as the Advisory Committee. The Committee also requested the Office for Outer Space Affairs to act as the executive secretariat.

35. The Committee requested the Advisory Committee, at its 1997 session, to finalize the agenda and agree on a specific date for UNISPACE III, taking into account the objectives agreed upon by consensus in the Working Group of the Whole as contained in its report. The Advisory Committee was also requested to work out the organizational aspects of the Conference and a schedule of events, such as workshops, poster sessions, trade exhibitions and other related activities, taking into account the need to have the widest possible participation, including the participation of private industry. The Committee also recommended that the Advisory Committee should outline the desired form of participation of relevant international, regional and other governmental and non-governmental organizations in preparation for UNISPACE III, with the goal being that all such organizations should have an opportunity to participate both in the preparatory activities and in the Conference.

36. The Committee recommended that, prior to the 1997 session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Secretariat should provide details of the venue and other information relating to UNISPACE III, including financial basis for the planning and execution of the Conference, in order to assist the Subcommittee in its role as the Advisory Committee.

Notes

1/ See Report of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Vienna, 9-21 August 1982 (A/CONF.101/10 and Corr.1 and 2).

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/51/20).